



2023-2024

Transportation Accountability Report



Report to the Board of Education
School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay)
Approved December 12, 2023



School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) Transportation Accountability Report 2023-2024

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School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) Transportation Accountability Report 2023-2024

District Information

School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) respectfully honours and acknowledges that we live, work, and learn on the unceded traditional territories of the Ktunaxa peoples and the chosen home of the Rocky Mountain Métis. The footprint of our School District is fully contained within the Ktunaxa Nation, including the communities of ʔaq'am and Yaq'it ʔa·knuq'i'it.

School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) (the “District”) is located in the southeast corner of the province of British Columbia. Our region features spectacular mountain scenery, clean lakes, forested hillsides, and an abundance of wildlife. With an approximate population of 36,000, most people live in the communities of Cranbrook, South Country (Baynes Lake, Grasmere, Elko, Galloway and Jaffray), Fernie, Sparwood and Elkford.

The District serves approximately 6,000 students in 17 neighbourhood schools (11 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, and 4 secondary schools); Kootenay Discovery School (KDS); Kootenay Education Services (KES); and the Kootenay Learning Campus (KLC), the Continuing Education program. Approximately 2,400 students are transported on 26 bus routes in and around Cranbrook and the Elk Valley.




Supporting the District’s [Educational Priority Three](#), students will feel welcome, safe and connected, the Transportation Department provides financial transportation assistance to parents, whose children are eligible to receive transportation, where bussing is not available. This enhances the connection to the school and to the District. The District also strives to create a welcoming, safe, and inclusive environment and has purchased a wheelchair accessible bus to ensure that each student has access to school. A transportation agreement has been developed in collaboration with both of our Indigenous communities to adjust our school bus routes to enhance the service level for our Indigenous students. The Transportation Department is active in the creation and implementation of the transportation plan with respect to the BC Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA), providing extracurricular access to our on-reserve Indigenous students. As part of the District’s commitment to reducing our carbon footprint, the District operates two electric buses. The District received the CE Series Electric School Bus grant as part of British Columbia’s mandate of a 40% greenhouse reduction for public fleets by 2030.

The Transportation Department’s priorities are student safety, fiscal responsibility, ridership, school viability and parent satisfaction.

The Transportation Department is guided by the [District’s Mission Statement](#) and by the [Board Policy Handbook and Administrative Procedures](#).



Transportation Highlights

-  All of our drivers have their Level One (1) first aid certification (renewed every three years);
-  The District operates twenty-six buses (13 in the Cranbrook Area, 13 in the Elk Valley with 8 spares buses for the district) that carry 2,425 students (2022/23 – 2,015) safely over 2,755 kilometers each day with an average one-way rider time of 56.5 minutes. We also carry 28 Students from School District 93;
-  Communication regarding bus route changes, delays or cancellations is done through School Messenger. School Messenger is an effective communication tool that allows the District to send emails and SMS messages directly to parents for real-time transportation updates.

Transportation Data

The following tables provide valuable information on the District's overall transportation operations:

Transportation Fact Summary	Elk Valley	Cranbrook	Total
Number of students transported	1,448	977	2,425
Number of transportation routes	13	13	26
Number of buses	18	16	34
Route kilometres traveled each day	1,410	1,345	2,755
Number of field trips per year (2021/22)	723	971	1,694
Number of field trips per year (2022/23)	786	1125	1911
Fuel costs per kilometre (\$/km)	0.70	0.70	0.70
Bus Field Trip Charge Back	34.00/Hr	34.00/Hr	34.00/Hr





Table 1-Fact Summary

Transportation Department Staff	Elk Valley	Cranbrook	Total
Manager of Operations	-	-	1
Assistant Managers of Operations	1	1	2
CUPE Support Staff (10 hours/week)	1	1	2
CUPE Mechanics	1	2	3
Mechanic Apprentice	1	-	1
CUPE Regular Bus Drivers	13	13	26
CUPE Spare Bus Drivers	6	7	13

Table 2-Staffing



The Board hired an independent consultant to complete a Student Transportation Analysis for the Elk Valley and Cranbrook in recent years. The following outcomes implemented by the Transportation Department are a result of the recommendations noted in the Student Transportation Analysis:

-  Reduction in kilometers driven (60.36 km per day);
-  Reduction in student wait times (171 minutes per day);
-  Reduction in time spent on bus (9 minutes per day); and
-  Reduction in before and after school supervision as a result of the above changes.

Fleet Management and Operations

The Board of Education of School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) continues to apply for provincial grants for new buses each year. The current fleet is comprised of 32 diesel buses and 2 electric buses. The electric buses are being utilized on longer routes in the District to reduce fuel costs.

The District will be joining the Association of School Transportation Services of British Columbia (ASTSBC) group to help sell generated Carbon Tax credits. Amounts received will be reinvested into transportation department initiatives. ASTSBC will be able to function as an aggregator on behalf of all BC schools and school districts operating electric buses, starting in January 2024. This will allow ASTSBC to manage the data input, collection and selling of credits.

A Go Electric School Bus presentation by the Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Low Carbon Innovation (EMLI) indicated that a School Bus Operator that supplies 24,000 kWh of electricity to an electric bus would earn up to 18 carbon credits (where 24,000 kWh is the equivalent of one bus). With credits trading on average at \$466 in 2023, 18 credits could potentially generate \$8,388 annually per bus.

The carbon credits do not offset the initial costs for electric buses.

Fleet Maintenance

District CUPE Mechanics perform the bus fleet maintenance. Scheduled maintenance includes lube and inspection every 1,500 kilometers and oil changes every 10,000 kilometers.



Transportation Budget

The total Transportation Department budget is \$2,336,782 (2022/23 - \$2,497,265). The breakdown of budget expenditures is shown in the chart below:

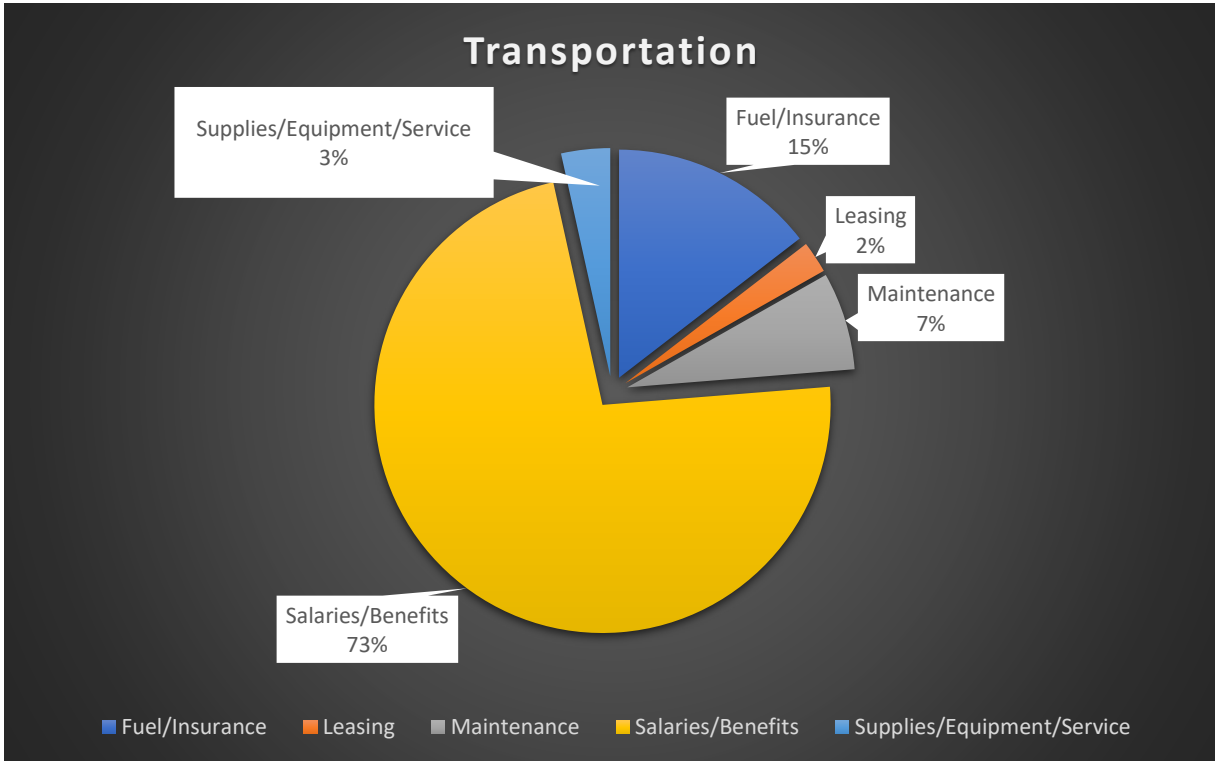


Chart 1-Transportation Budget

District Transportation Challenges

The District is facing financial challenges in managing transportation expenses (fuel and maintenance costs), given the disparity between the actual costs and the funds allocated by the Ministry. For example, a standard diesel bus tailored to our needs, has an average cost of approximately \$335,000 whereas electric buses cost approximately \$470,000 before factoring in \$100,000 in rebates. The Ministry provides \$247,000 in funding per bus. The cost of each bus purchased is falling significantly short compared to funding received.

The Transportation Department is contemplating a shift in the school charge cost for transportation requests. Currently, fuel and driver's time is being accounted for but maintenance costs are not.

Accommodating student accessibility is a priority for the Transportation Department, however this is challenging in the Elk Valley. Therefore, as part of the 2023/24 minor capital plan, the District has applied for funding for an Accessible Bus in the Elk Valley.

The driver recruitment plan, launched last year, has been notably successful, resulting in an adequate number of available drivers (full time and casual).